AN EYE
SQUARE
CAMP
IN EACH
LAUREN
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“Not to know but to go on.”

AGNES MARTIN
I had plundered past nervous. A tense Walmart truck clanging the interstate. Smoke gnawing the face of some mountain. America, aromatic

with ravages. In schism. Sacrificed. I stayed
woke most nights near the door. Occupied with every handle. Four years

my father had gone from corridor to quiver and I mustered my saddle
to get to him often. Four years of crinkled conversing.

Yes, and ginger. I shivered through rooms
of my home in the desert with its stoic astonishments

and took on some needles. I couldn’t settle the ache.
The curt country and my family. Every ache size, every shape.

To reset, I’ve come to the distance, to watch the ocean repeat
how to unfinish. I brought with me a light jacket and a thick book

about Agnes Martin. I’m not sure
why I packed it, what it celebrates, but I know the artist

and her simple lines against excess. Know she made
sacred an emptiness. Maybe I’ll hear thin strands of refuge

apart from the chaos that circles. What I want
is nothing. No meaning, no matter, no more. I’ve run away
with the most fragile questions. Haggard
in a small room big enough for a bed

with its modest blanket. I let my watch doze on the sill.
Minor details hurtle over grasses. A windribbed fence.

The land around me tugs. I don’t know it. Fog covers.
Blank space consumes me.

I figure every day I’ll navigate to the tail end of this small town
with its translucent leavings. What I want to figure out

is what could be in the neithers. I am entering
a conversation with Agnes for no reason I yet understand. I am not looking
to rivet to her, but to be extracted
from the sharp cuff of politics, of dementia-tweaked presence, of the gravity

of a future that keeps rolling toward me. How do you recover
from a decisive wound? A line, a line: it never leaves you.
SLOW MOTION

The bus turns a corner. At the margin
an uprooted big leaf maple, the hem of water.
Piles of shells throated from ocean.

What am I looking at? Poles, a meadow,
a storefront: all generous and empty.
Sometimes empty is what we do with ourselves.

I arrive to my small room.
A bee belts the glass and works again
with its black shoes.
As proof I exist, my pack at the door.

In the middle of this stillness, I call my father.
His words settle along the salal
in dry spirals. I see things to be equal:

the furl of ferns and an osprey rocketed from the pines.
How else might we begin?

Everywhere I look, morning, night,
grass blade by blade, the towing sky.
INTO THIS ABSENCE

What is available to us?
Simple routines: fault and moments.

Between building and building, dark fogs
drizzle. The world is enormous. Unfathomable salt.

A slug on the path posits its feelers to figure which way
to turn. Some slow work to go forward.

Agnes Martin teetered and retreated.

I’m tracking down less.
The line resting right there.

Again and again. And below it.
After talking death with a friend all morning, what I need is this truth
that runs through the hiatus, the measured task
the mind makes to move off either side.